

The Effects of Women's Experience on Their Spirituality

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Whatever else the feminist movement may have accomplished, it has established the fact that Western society, including the Christian church, is male-dominated.¹ Some are convinced that this state of affairs corresponds to the divine plan of God.² Others, both men and women, are convinced that the God of Judeo-Christian revelation calls us to liberate ourselves and one another from what can only be called the shackles of sexism, as we are to liberate ourselves from racism, anti-Semitism, and every other form of human oppression.³

In this article I am not concerned primarily with the fact of this male dominance, nor with its injustice, nor with strategies for overcoming it. Rather, I want to investigate the effect of the experience of male dominance, whether welcomed or rejected, on the religious experience or spirituality of women. In particular, I am interested in how their experience of religious marginalization, exclusion, and subordination has affected women's ministry and their sense of themselves in relation to God.⁴

No one will be surprised by the assertion that the overt effects of male dominance on women's spirituality have been largely negative. But I am more concerned with another aspect of these effects, an aspect that I do not think has received very much attention and that I feel has great potential for the spiritual development of

women, namely, what I might call the “flip-side” of these negative effects, the seeds of new life in an experience of death.

Let us turn first to the more easily observable dimension of women’s spirituality, namely, the ministerial dimension. It is only within the last ten to twenty years that women Catholics have even used the term *ministry* in relation to themselves. In general, nonordained Catholics, male or female, did not see themselves as active participants in the church’s mission except through a generalized good example in the faithful performance of the duties of their state in life.⁵ But women’s experience had two characteristics which lay male experience did not.

First, unlike men, women *could* not be ordained, and thus the real possibility of participation in the official ministry of the church did not function in the shaping of the religious imagination and self-understanding of Catholic girls as they grew to maturity in the church. While boys experienced ministry as a viable option for themselves and freely situated themselves in relation to this possibility, girls experienced themselves as completely excluded from this dimension of Christian experience. Only recently, as women who feel called to ordained ministry share their stories with the community, have we begun to realize how humanly destructive and spiritually traumatic this early experience of ecclesial rejection has been for female Catholics.⁶

Secondly, women in general, even in their secular lives, rarely functioned in public or independent roles. There were, in secular spheres, always notable exceptions: women writers, teachers, doctors, politicians, and lawyers. But they were considered anomalies. Most women were socialized in the church, as well as in the secular sphere, to nonpublic roles. In the public spheres the normal woman appeared, to herself and to others, as male-dependent. She was the daughter of, the mother of, the sister of, the wife of someone who had a name in a way that she never would. Just as she supported the significant males in her life as they graduated from professional school, ran for office, made policy, declared and fought wars, and made the money that supported their families, so women in the church supported significant males as they advanced to ordination, made the rules Catholics lived by, administered the sacraments, and governed the church.

EFFECTS OF EXCLUSION FROM MINISTRY

What effects did women's exclusion from ordained ministry have on their self-understanding as Christians? It is fairly easy to list a number of negative effects. First, women seldom considered themselves as called to ministry. What we would today refer to as ministry, women considered as "auxiliary services," perhaps a form of lay apostolate, or just neighborly kindness. Visiting the sick, singing in the choir, teaching CCD, raising a Christian family, nursing and teaching and social work were not considered part of the official ministry of the church but, as lay activities, ways of helping the clergy in ministry that properly belonged only to them.

Secondly, women early in life developed a fairly pronounced and much emphasized sense of sacral unworthiness. Not only could they not be ordained; they were not even to be in the sanctuary while divine service was taking place. They were not to touch the sacred vessels nor read the word of God in public. Even functions that a six-year-old boy could perform, such as serving Mass or bearing the processional cross, were forbidden to even the most spiritually mature and experienced woman Christian.⁷

A corollary of their sacral unworthiness was their total sacramental dependence on men. The approach to God in the characteristically Catholic way, that is through the sacraments of penance and Eucharist, was totally male-controlled and women thus totally male-dependent. Although most women surely experienced this dependence as simply "the way things are," there were occasions when the painfulness of their inferior sacramental position rose to consciousness. This occurred, for example, when mothers had to explain to their little daughters why they could not be altar servers, when sisters had to submit to weekly experiences of confession to chaplains appointed without the sisters' advice or consent and who were often appointed to the "good sisters" because they were unsuitable for other ministries, and when sacraments were denied women who found divorce and remarriage the only solution to desertion or domestic violence.

Women's exclusion from orders reinforced their subordination in all spheres because it divinized maleness and conversely excluded

femininity from the sphere of the divine.⁸ The priest was seen as the very representative of God, "another Christ." This divine status, in principle open to all men, was closed to women who not only could not accede to divine status but could not have any access to the divinity except through the mediation of men. We have perhaps not even begun to fathom the extent to which a priori exclusion of women, solely because they are women, from ordained ministry has limited, distorted, and subverted the Christian identity of women. This rejection of women, however, has a "flip side," a set of effects that we have perhaps not properly evaluated nor maximized. Indeed, they are effects that could only be seen as positive potentialities in the light of the kinds of realizations that feminist thought has so recently brought to the level of consciousness.

First is the fact that the ministry of women, which has been no less real for the fact of being unrecognized and unnamed, has never been "ritualized." From one point of view this is unfortunate. But from another point of view it is a blessing. There is an inverse ratio between ritualization and personalization. It belongs to the very nature of ritual that it largely subsumes the individuality of the ritualist. Women's ministry has never been anything other than the personal service of one human being to another in the name of Christ. It is fairly easy to ritualize personal service; but as anyone who has tried to implement the liturgical reforms of Vatican II knows well, it is not nearly so easy to repersonalize ministries that have been almost totally ritualized. Women have initiated children into the Christian experience at every level; they have heard the anguished avowals of the guilty and loved them to reconciliation; they have made mealtimes experiences of Christian unity; they have consoled the sick and assisted the dying into the arms of God. None of this ministerial activity, even though it is the substance of the sacraments, is ritualized when carried out by women. It has never lost its entirely personal and interpersonal character. Such ministry, in the hands of women, has rarely been an exercise of power or a mode of social control and discipline. The nonritualized ministry of women has contributed very little to the pervasive image of the Christian God as a stern, even violent, father-figure bent on exact justice and retribution. Indeed, experienced spiritual directors know that, when a person's violent God image begins to be healed, that healing is very often effected by, and expressed in, a recognition

in God of the qualities one has experienced in the women in one's life—mother, sister, wife, or lover.

It is not surprising that women ministers in general have had, as a group, far less difficulty in understanding and practicing their ministries as service rather than as exercises of power. And a corollary of this "power-less" experience of ministry is that women ministers in the postconciliar church have been quickest to revise their institutional commitments in order to respond to unconventional but very real needs. Women ministers have led the way in identification with the oppressed and in real commitment of personal and communal resources to the promotion of social justice here and abroad.⁹

I would not want to be understood as suggesting that the exclusion of women from ordination and the nonrecognition of their ministry is justifiable or good. But it is a fact. It is also a fact that those who have been persecuted, humiliated, undervalued, and denied their rightful place in the society of the church are singularly well equipped for identification with the great Minister, Jesus, who was himself a simple layman persecuted and disowned by the religious authorities of his day, and who found in his solidarity with the poor and the unrecognized the basis for a nonritualized ministry of personal service characterized by a gentleness and a powerlessness that were singularly revelatory of the true God.¹⁰

EFFECTS OF SOCIALIZATION

The effects on women's ministerial consciousness of their socialization into private, male-dependent roles in the church has also been largely negative in ways analogous to the effects of their exclusion from ordained ministry. First, women have been virtually excluded from any participation in the shaping of the church's internal and external policy. The church's laws regarding marriage, which apply in their burdensome dimensions disproportionately to women, have been formulated without the contribution of the women whose experience is in question. Canon law regarding religious, of whom three out of every four in the church are women, has been formulated by men without the input of the women whose lives it governs¹¹ and, in most respects, it is also enforced by men. Official

church documents on every kind of social problem—poverty, war, economics, labor, medical ethics, political involvement—have been formulated without the contribution of women who constitute the vast majority of the poor and the starving throughout the world, who make fifty-nine cents to every dollar made by men for comparable work in this country, who experience in their bodies as mothers a disproportionate number of the medical problems that raise moral issues, who almost always find themselves the sole support of dependent children when marriages collapse.¹²

Secondly, women's socialization to private, male-dependent roles in the church has kept most women from exercising religious leadership. Not only has this deprived the church of vast resources of creative leadership; it has deprived women of a sense of themselves and of other women as leaders and limited their imagination in regard to what services they might render. Women religious have constituted something of a counteracting force in the sphere of leadership, but it is only very recently that religious women have reclaimed their leadership from a kind of pseudoclericalization and have begun to use it to empower, and be empowered by, their lay sisters.

A third effect is the tendency of most women to accept as normal and unquestionable the monopoly of leadership and authority by the men with whom they work. Women who experience themselves as always subordinate to men, and who depend on men for affirmation and approval, are very threatened by the emergence of leadership potential in other women. Indeed, many women actually mistrust women in ministerial situations and prefer to work for men. Such women attribute to themselves and to other women the stereotypical traits of flightiness, lack of confidentiality, poor judgment, sentimentality, and lack of intelligence that they have been socialized to regard as characteristic of women whose appropriate role is in the private sphere and in subordination to men.

At this point I would again like to investigate the "flip side," the positive potential hidden in this base coin of women's male-dependent socialization in the church. One effect of women's rarely functioning in ministry except in subordination to men is that women, in general, have more experience of men in ministry than men do of women. Women have never carried on exclusively feminine ministries. They have always had to involve men at some level

or other and find ways to work with or around them. Men have rarely had to deal with women as equals and virtually never, until very recently, as superiors. The result, which is becoming very evident in the contemporary church, is that women are far better prepared, in most cases, for partnership with men in ministry than men are for working with women.

A second, and closely related effect, is that women's adjustment to their new more public roles is, by comparison, far easier than men's corresponding adjustment to nonpublic roles. Public skills, for example, conducting meetings, speaking in public, and administration, are relatively easy for an intelligent adult person to master. But skill in the private sphere, skill in interpersonal relationships, empathy, a sense of the feeling tone of a complicated situation, sensitivity to others—the skills in which most women have been exercised from their earliest years and in which they have received endless practice in their private and subordinate roles as adults—are much more difficult to master when one starts late in life.

Although it is unfortunate that women have borne much more than their share of responsibility for fostering the human and personal qualities of interaction, it is indeed fortunate that someone has preserved these qualities, and the ministry of the church will surely be enriched in years to come as women's experience more deeply influences the ministerial activity of the church. We can expect ever more emphasis on mutuality, shared responsibility, nonauthoritarian policies and procedures, and basic humaneness in operation as concern for persons catches up with our overly developed concern for institutions.¹³

A third effect of women's private socialization in the church is that women have usually been the victims of hierarchical organization, seldom participants in it. Although the effect of victimization by power structures is sometimes, indeed often, to motivate the victims to seize that power for themselves when they get the chance and use it to similarly victimize others, it can also happen that the victims repudiate for others that from which they themselves have suffered so much.¹⁴ It is sadly true that there are some women in the church who seek power in order to do to others what has been done to them. But what is much more obvious, especially in women's religious communities, is that women find it easy to imagine and create non-hierarchical community structures. They talk much more easily

than most men do of participative government, shared authority, noncoercive discipline, empowerment, and mutuality.¹⁵ Women in ministerial situations, especially those in which they have some degree of leadership, are introducing these same nondominative values and patterns into the church's service.

Again, I have no intention of denying or white-washing the distortion of women's ministerial consciousness that their socialization to exclusively private, male-dependent roles has brought about; nor do I wish to pretend that all women have profited by their painful experience and that none have become alienated, angry, or vengeful. But women's suffering has rarely been without fruit, even when it was unjustly caused and violent in nature. Recent studies of women ministers in the church and of women who feel called to ordained ministry, for example, show patterns of remarkable psychological maturity, commitment, tolerance of hardship, and developed ministerial consciousness that comparable studies of male ordained ministers do not show.¹⁶

MASCULINIZING RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Let us turn now to the less public sphere of women's spirituality, namely, their experience of God. I want to look at two factors that have conditioned that experience and at the effects, again both negative and positive, of that conditioning. First is what I have called the "masculinizing" of Christian religious experience. As the history of spirituality shows, the vast majority of (though certainly not all) spiritual directors and authors of spiritual books have been men. Virtually all theologians have been men. All confessors and most counselors have been men. Even in women's religious orders most of the instruction and formation was either done by men or out of the books and rules written by men. The effects of this predominance of masculine experience on women's spiritual formation is quite evident and much of it is unfortunate.

First, men have been largely ignorant of the existence of a feminine approach to the spiritual life that might be quite different from their own. Male spiritual directors, retreat directors, and preachers habitually propose for women a combination of masculine spiritual practice and the ideal of the "eternal feminine" which, in Jungian

terms, is more a projection of the male "anima" than a real ideal for women.¹⁷ Men have taught women to beware of specifically male vices: pride, aggression, disobedience to lawful hierarchical authority, homosexuality, lust, and the like. Women have rarely been alerted to those vices to which their socialization prompts them, for example, weak submissiveness, fear, self-hatred, jealousy, timidity, self-absorption, small-mindedness, submersion of personal identity, and manipulation.¹⁸

Secondly, the predominance of the intellectual over the affective approach to the knowledge of God, of method over intuition in prayer, of Christian warfare over friendship as the model of the spiritual life, of asceticism over mysticism, of submission to authority over personal initiative in the apostolate have all expressed the concerns of men and the experiences of men. Women down through the ages have been urged by women as well as by men to be "virile" in their spiritual lives, to conquer themselves, to be soldiers of Christ in the spiritual army of God, to acquire by force the "manly" virtues.¹⁹

A third and particularly lamentable effect of male dominance in the area of spirituality has been the partial eclipse of the feminine experience and feminine models in Scripture and in the history of spirituality. Women have rarely been encouraged to imitate the great women of salvation history. Rarely is a eucharistic president, even at a liturgy celebrated by a preponderantly female community, sufficiently sensitive to modify the Eucharistic Prayer's retracing of salvation history in order to call to mind not only Adam but Eve, not only Abraham and Isaac and Jacob but also Sara and Rebekah and Rachel, not only Moses but Miriam, not only David but Ruth, not only Peter but Mary Magdalene. The only feminine model who has been invoked with real fervor and consistency in the male church has been Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and that invocation has been badly misused in many periods of church history to reinforce and sacralize the subordination and passivity of women.²⁰ We have fewer records of women saints, partly because men set the criteria for sanctity and wrote the hagiographies. Even those women who have been canonized have rarely had the same type of official prominence that male saints have enjoyed. There was, after all, little they could be except "virgins" or "martyrs," or "neither virgin nor martyr." Until our own day no woman was ever recognized as a doctor of the

church,²¹ despite the array of women theologians and spiritual giants such as Juliana of Norwich, Catherine of Genoa, Teresa of Avila, Hadewijch of Antwerp, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, the Gertrudes, the Brigids, Catherine of Siena, Marie of the Incarnation, Angela of Foligno, and all the others.

Finally, women have been largely conditioned to evaluate anything in their spiritual experience that seemed especially feminine as questionable or negative. Even Teresa of Avila laments continually the weak and womanly (virtually equivalent terms) traits of herself and her sisters.²² Passivity in prayer has been suspect; compassion is too likely to be weakness; gentleness with oneself is probably tepidity; and gentleness with others a compromise of values. It is only in our own day, as more and more spiritual seekers have turned to the spiritualities of the East, that we have come to look critically at our body-denying, overly methodical, highly verbal and intellectual, muscular, vertical, conquering model of the spiritual life.²³ Suddenly interior silence, passivity, body-centered prayer, patience with oneself, compassion for others, and intuition, all stereotypically feminine elements, are emerging as desirable aspects of the spirituality of everyone, men and women alike.

While it is certainly true that feminine religious experience has never been lacking in the church, it is equally true that it has been undervalued and underutilized and that the spiritual lives of women have been much impoverished by the masculinizing of religious experience throughout history.

But once again I would like to attend to the "flip side" of this impoverishment. As Carl Jung has so convincingly explained, individuation, or the process of human self-actualization that is the characteristic developmental task of the middle years if a person is to reach maturity in the second half of life, is a function of the integration of our conscious ego with the material of the unconscious. In particular, Jungian psychological theory has made us aware of the necessity for a person to integrate the contrasexual side of his or her personality if he or she is to achieve wholeness. The woman must bring to consciousness and integrate the masculine in herself and the man must do the same with the feminine in himself.²⁴ I think that women have a large head start on this project as it realizes itself in the area of spirituality.

First, women have always been taught to value the masculine

in themselves, to seek to acquire masculine virtues and to think and pray in masculine ways. The God they seek to imitate has been imaged in masculine terms. On the contrary, men have been spiritually trained to repress as shameful the feminine in themselves, to deny it and disguise it.²⁵ Women may well have to work to appreciate to the full the feminine in themselves, but it is, after all, their own identity. Men have the more difficult task of reversing the negative judgment on the feminine in general and especially in themselves and then incorporating it. In one sense, women have accomplished the more difficult task, the appropriation of the opposite. Women often need to come home to themselves in their femininity in the spiritual life.²⁶ But that is often the less strenuous of the two tasks.

A second effect of the masculinizing of women's spiritual experience is that women often understand men's spiritual experience better than men understand women's. In one sense, women have "been there," have undertaken the same modes and procedures, embraced the same ideals and models, striven for the same goals in the spiritual life and suffered from the same kinds of fears and failures that men have. It is not at all surprising to me that the vast increase in the number of spiritual directors in this country has been among women. Not only do women have a variety and depth of interpersonal experience often lacking to men that well fits them for one-to-one ministry, developed skills in the private sphere, and a nonhierarchical approach to ministry that many people welcome; but many women also have a much more whole, that is both masculine and feminine, approach to spiritual experience.²⁷

EFFECTS OF EXCLUSIVELY MALE GOD

Now let us turn to a second factor that has conditioned women's experience of God, namely, the presentation of God in almost exclusively male terms. I am not speaking here of the masculinity of Jesus, which is a separate topic too extensive to handle in this article, but of God, the creator of all things and the source of life upon whom all human beings depend. Let me say at the outset that Scripture does not present God in exclusively male terms.²⁸ As the well-known biblical scholar, Phyllis Trible, has shown in her remarkable book *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*,²⁹ God is presented from the mo-

ment of creation as one whose true image is humanity as male-and-female, and that the feminine dimension of God is repeatedly highlighted in the Old Testament. It is also true that the Spirit of God is personified in the Old Testament as the feminine figure Wisdom³⁰ and it is she who appears in the New Testament as the Spirit of Jesus. Nevertheless, largely because all rabbis, priests, Scripture scholars, and preachers have been men, neither the feminine dimension of God nor the feminine presentation of the Spirit has been adverted to in our religious training or liturgical experience. Many Catholics are genuinely shocked the first time they hear a professor or homilist refer to God our Mother or to the Holy Spirit as "she."

The negative effects of this exclusively masculine presentation of God on the religious experience of women are not hard to identify. Perhaps the most profoundly destructive is the deep sense of exclusion from the divine that women imbibe as part of their sense of who they are. God, to women, is man "writ large." Men are God "writ small." God and man belong to the same order of things and from that order women are excluded. How else can we explain the fact that women, for so long, considered it a matter of divine institution that only men could "represent God" as family head or ordained minister?³¹ Indeed, many women are still profoundly uncomfortable even in receiving Communion from a woman and utterly incapable of conceiving of a woman as eucharistic president. Women's sense of the inappropriateness of women's participating in the sphere of the divine is a projection onto their sisters of their own sense of themselves as alienated from the divine. Much healing of sacralized self-repudiation is necessary before women, taught from infancy that God is malelike and males are Godlike, can appropriate their own real and equal participation in the divine nature.³²

A second negative effect on women's spirituality of the masculine presentation of God is that women (and men as well) have most often experienced God the way they have experienced men. They admire, depend upon, and defer to God. But they can also be dominated, used, undervalued, and basically despised by God. They are ever guilty, a nuisance, and can justify themselves only by unrelenting service, continual performance, and lowly self-effacement. For a woman to come to any real appreciation of what she means to God, not for what she does but for who she is, not in spite

of her sins but because of her beauty, often requires immense effort in prayer and the wise support of a mature and liberated spiritual guide.

A third and closely related negative effect on women's spirituality of the masculine presentation of God is the sense many women instinctively have that they must go to God through and by the permission of men. Just as women have had to present themselves, until quite recently, to the secular world as "Mrs."—that is, an extension of a named male—or as "Miss"—that is, not yet fully adult because not yet named and claimed by a man—so women have related to God rather exclusively through men by whom they were baptized and confirmed, from whom alone they could receive the Eucharist, to whom they had to go with every secret sin, who presided over their marriage or religious vows, and will anoint them at the moment of death. The word of God was preached to them by men and, as women, they were excluded from the study of theology which would give them independent access to the meaning of that word. Marriage problems, vocational crises, and the religious doubts of women were all handled by men. Even a religious congregation composed entirely of women could not open or close a chapter, elect a major superior, amend its own constitutions, or receive the vows of its new members without the empowering presence of a man. In short, any matter which was even remotely related to the realm of the sacred was mediated to women by men.

There can be no doubt that this experience of God as male with its logical conclusions has been negative in the extreme. But, once again, there is a "flip side" to this base coin to which we do well to attend in order that we might appreciate and maximize it.

First, women's sense of being not among the truly Godlike has preserved in women, much more than in men, the sense of the utter "otherness" and noncontrollability of God. Women have little tendency to assimilate themselves to God, to attempt to present themselves as God's vicar on earth, or to speak in God's name.³³ Women are frequently much more sensitive to the reality of God's actual and free intervention in their lives, less ready to explain it away or attribute it to their own talent or luck. Women are often more ready to appeal to God for help and believe that God can and will respond. It is often said that women carry the faith and pass it on to the next generation. There is no doubt that the majority of churchgoers, as

well as of religious, are women. Real religion is born of a profound sense of the otherness and transcendence of God and, although women have been shortchanged on the specifically Christian experience of God's likeness to us by the Incarnation, they are perhaps the chosen bearers of the sense of God's transcendence, a sense that alone can keep us from annihilating our race in an orgy of technological and military hubris.

Secondly, because women have not experienced themselves as representatives of God, they have almost never taken it upon themselves in the course of history to persecute others in the name of God. Women have been hounded as witches, condemned and branded, imprisoned and executed by the males of the religious establishment, but they have very rarely condemned others in the name of God or fought holy wars to destroy God's enemies. As women enter various ministries to the so-called sinners—to the divorced and remarried, to homosexuals and lesbians, to prostitutes and alcoholics and addicts—they seldom feel called upon to threaten people with divine wrath. Women ministers often choose to circumvent or ignore questions of excommunication and of who can and cannot receive the sacraments, and to offer people what they need rather than what they “deserve.”

Thirdly, the fact—undoubtedly deplorable in itself—that women have always been totally dependent on men for official religious participation has led women to specialize in the only religious activity they could engage in without male permission or help—namely, personal prayer. Anyone with much experience in the ministry of spiritual direction can testify to the fact that women, by and large, have much better developed personal prayer lives than men. One finds that even among the clergy a distressing number of men have never learned to do real *lectio divina* that does not degenerate into study, to meditate in such a way as to pass beyond the rational to the affective, or to enter even the lower reaches of contemplation. For many men, at least until quite recently, their prayer life has consisted in “saying Mass” and/or “reading the office.” Women, on the contrary, often through their restriction to devotional prayers and their exclusion from the public sphere of ministerial activity, have frequently found their way through to genuine affective prayer, often of a high order.

I hope that it is evident that I do not condone in any way, nor wish to perpetuate for one minute longer, the marginalization or oppression of women in the church. But I do think that women's unique experience as Christians, structured as it is by the paschal mystery of Jesus, in which life eternal issues from the death inflicted on him by human evil, instructs us always to stir the ashes of human violence in the expectation that the phoenix of new life will rise before our eyes. The religious experience of women has been limited and distorted in many ways while their ministry has gone unnamed and their vocation to ordination denied. But their suffering, inexcusable as it is, has also been a fire in which much gold has been refined. That gold belongs to women, but it has been given to them by the same God who entrusted the message of the resurrection to a woman, Mary Magdalene, who instructs us as he instructed her, to take this good news of salvation to our brothers as well as to our sisters. The good news is that the night of oppression and inferiority is dying and that a new day is dawning—a day in which the religious experience and ministry of women will be fully at the service of the church for the liberation of men as well as of women. It is the privilege of our generation to greet this new day with the song of Miriam, who led the sons and daughters of Israel in worship after they had crossed over from slavery to the freedom of the children of God.

NOTES

1. The findings concerning the universal oppression of women by the representatives at the United Nations International Women's Year meeting in 1975 were so devastating that the decade 1975–85 was declared the Decade of Women. When the mid-decade meeting was held in 1980 to evaluate the progress made so far, it was found that the situation of women throughout the world had actually deteriorated since 1975.

2. The most recent full scale presentation and defense of this position is S. B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1980).

3. In the document summarizing the dialogues between representatives of the Women's Ordination Conference and of the National Con-

ference of Catholic Bishops of the U.S., released by the NCCB on May 28, 1981, there is a section summarizing areas of agreement and of disagreement between WOC and episcopal participants. The first area of disagreement was formulated as follows: "Patriarchy is understood as divinely derived because it reflects the natural order and thus is the order of creation" (bishops) vs. "Patriarchy is understood as a reflection of an unjust societal order and not part of God's order of creation" (WOC). "Dialogue on Women in the Church: Interim Report," *Origins* 11 (25 June 1981): 90.

4. For a particularly well-documented treatment of this subject, see J.W. Conn, "Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction," *Cross Currents* 30 (1980): 293-308.

5. In the 1940s, '50s, and '60s the accepted definition of the "lay apostolate" was "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy." See Pope Pius XII, "Allocution to Italian Catholic Action" (4 September 1940), *AAS* 32 (1940): 362.

6. The *National Catholic Reporter*, 17 July 1981, devoted a good part of the issue to the question of women's desire for ordination. It included considerable firsthand testimony of women to their experience of exclusion. Similar stories emerged during the Second Women's Ordination Conference held in Baltimore, Maryland, November 10-12, 1978. The proceedings of the conference were published as *New Woman, New Church, New Priestly Ministry*, ed. Maureen Dwyer (Baltimore, 1980).

7. That the root of this exclusion of women from the realm of sacred things and actions in ritual taboos related to menstruation and childbearing is fairly generally recognized today. Despite this fact, the exclusion of women from even such minor roles as serving at the eucharistic liturgy was reiterated by the Vatican Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship in a collection of norms on Eucharistic Practices, approved by Pope John Paul II on April 17, 1980 and issued May 23, 1980. The text, "*Inaestimabile Donum*," appears in *Origins* 10 (5 June 1980): 41-44; see par. 18, p. 43.

8. This divinization of maleness has led some feminists to a revival of goddess worship and/or witchcraft in an attempt to counteract its destructive effect on women's sense of self. See, for example, C. P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. C. P. Christ and J. Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 273-87; and N. R. Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon, 1979), pp. 85-114.

M. Daly is perhaps the most categorical (former?) Catholic writer on this subject. She has concluded that the myth and symbols of Christianity are

inherently and unredeemably sexist. See M. Daly, "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," *Quest* 1 (1974): 21. See also her *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).

9. I am referring here to the widely recognized leadership of women religious in the church's contemporary turn toward active involvement in social justice.

10. A profound and biblically very sound meditation on this aspect of Jesus' ministry is A. Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978).

11. See R. A. Hill, "Canon Law After Vatican II: Renewal or Retreat?" *America* 137 (1977): 298-300.

12. See M. P. Burke, *Reaching for Justice: The Women's Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Concern, 1980), especially chap. 4, for documentation of the disproportionate burden of poverty borne by women.

13. See, for example, D. Donnelly, Team: *Theory and Practice of Team Ministry* (New York: Paulist, 1977).

14. The recognition on the part of women concerned with the ordination question of the dangers inherent in incorporation into the clerical caste and system has led many to the position that the clerical system must be changed before women should accept ordination. See A. Kelley and A. Walsh, "Ordination: A Questionable Goal for Women," *The Ecumenist* 11 (July-August 1973): 81-84, as well as the proceedings of the Second Women's Ordination Conference (fn. 6 above).

15. See, for example, *LCWR Recommendations: Schema of Canons on Religious Life* (Washington, D.C.: LCWR, 1977) in which the major superiors of women's congregations in the United States repeatedly criticized the hierarchical, noncollegial, and dominative principles underlying the provisions of the proposed code.

16. See F. Ferder, *Called to Break Bread?: A Psychological Investigation of 100 Women Who Feel Called to Priesthood in the Catholic Church* (Mt. Rainier, Md.: Quixote Center, 1978), especially pp. 27-32.

17. On the "anima" archetype see E. Jung, *Animus and Anima* (Dallas: Spring, 1957 and 1981), pp. 45-94; R. A. Johnson, *He: Understanding Masculine Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); J. A. Sanford, *The Invisible Partners: How the Male and Female in Each of Us Affects Our Relationships* (New York: Paulist, 1980).

18. After writing this paper I discovered that virtually this same point had been made quite a while ago, and at length, by V. S. Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine Viewpoint," *The Nature of Man in Theological and Psychological Perspective*, ed. S. Doniger (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 151-70. My thanks to B. Waugh of the Center for

Women and Religion of the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, for this reference.

19. Teresa of Avila is a doctor of the church who, from time to time, gives voice to the negative spiritual stereotypes of women in her day. See, for example, *The Interior Castle*, trans. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (New York: Paulist, 1979), IV, 3, 11, p. 83; V, 3, 10, p. 101; and elsewhere.

20. A particularly valuable study of the potentiality and the abuse of Mariology is R. R. Reuther's *Mary—The Feminine Face of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

21. P. Paul VI declared St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena doctors of the church on October 4, 1970.

22. See fn. 19 above.

23. M. Fox in *A Spirituality Named Compassion and the Healing of the Global Village, Humpty Dumpty and Us* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1979) gives a rather thoroughgoing criticism of "phallic" spirituality.

24. This is the project described by Sanford in *The Invisible Partners*.

25. One of the problems with Jung's theory of the archetype of the "animus," the masculine principle in women, is that he seems to construct it as a kind of mirror image of the "anima," the feminine principle in men, without attending to the basically different and unequal valuation of masculine and feminine by women as well as by men. Goldenberg in *Changing of the Gods*, pp. 46–71, gives an appreciative but very critical evaluation of Jungian archetypal theory, especially as it applies to women.

26. A. B. Ulanov, *Receiving Women: Studies in the Psychology and Theology of the Feminine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981) deals specifically with this developmental task of women.

27. This phenomenon was noted years ago by J. Wintz, "Women: The Church's Newest Spiritual Guides," *St. Anthony Messenger* 83 (May 1976): 22–27.

28. S. M. Schneiders, "Christian Tradition on Women," *SIDIC* 9 (Fall 1976): 8–13.

29. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

30. See Reuther, *Mary*, pp. 25–30.

31. Cf. C. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," p. 275.

32. Cf. C. Christ and J. Plaskow, "Introduction: Womanspirit Rising," *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 2–3.

33. It is notable that the leadership of the Moral Majority is entirely male-dominated and that a major plank in the MM platform is the necessity to keep women in subordination to men by the nonratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and by so-called profamily legislation.